

# INFORMATION REPORT

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## Status of Agriculture in the Smolensk and Vitebsk Regions

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1. The Smolensk region [Zapadnaya Oblast] as of December 1944, contained 55 to 60 sovkhoses. Up to this period, the primary agricultural yield was potatoes. These vegetables were considered the most important crops of the region. The yield per hectare [2.7 acres] varied from 600 to 650 pud per hectare [10.8 to 11.2 short tons].
2. The crop next in importance and yield was cabbage. The yield per hectare varied from 400 to 450 pud [7.2 to 8.1 short tons].
3. Onions, cucumbers, carrots, radishes and other garden varieties were always grown in sufficient quantity for domestic consumption. Hay, barley, wheat and beans were sufficient to meet regional needs.
4. Under state organization the sovkhoses gave 60% of their total yield to the state. The remaining 40% was distributed and divided among the 150 to 200 sovkhoszniks who worked the farm. Kholkhozniks, on the other hand, were permitted to retain the yield from one-fourth of a hectare and sell it in the open market if they desired. However, if the Kholkhozes were short in their prescribed quotas, the kholkhoznik suffered in that he had to compensate for the overall loss by using the yield which had originally been allotted to him, that is the one-fourth of a hectare which under law belonged to him was used to fulfill the overall quota. [The kholkhoznik was anxious to fulfill the state impinged norm to protect himself against charges of sabotage.]
5. During the WWII period when German forces occupied the Smolensk and Vitebsk regions, many sovkhoszniks and kholkhozniks were killed. Those who were not molested by the Germans fared exceptionally well. The Germans deemed the continued existence of an already organized farming unit as necessary.

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- 2 -

Consequently the settlers were encouraged to provide livestock and produce for the occupiers of the region. Since the Germans were not too familiar with the schematic organization and productivity of the state farms, the settlers divided the land, the livestock and agricultural implements among themselves. They, of course, met the requirements as imposed by the Germans and had plenty for themselves.

6. It is estimated that over 300 thousand top agriculturalists [farmers and agronomists] are now [November 1953] in Soviet concentration camps. Several months ago Nikita Khrushchev practically acknowledged the above by stating in the press that large numbers of agriculturalists from the Western USSR were in prison because they were considered enemies of the Soviet State. In September 1953 50 thousand agricultural workers were sent to the Western USSR. I believe the underlying reason for this is not because of a shortage in qualified workmen. In my opinion, these workers are considered reliable by the government which intends to place them in key spots beneficial to the administration.
7. The major agricultural centers of the Zapadnaya Oblast served as headquarters for Plant Disease Control. The chief organization, Odel Po Borbye Vridytelnaya Rostenyami [organization to combat and control crop infestation] had from 12 to 15 agronomists stationed at Smolensk. Whenever an agronomist at one of the sovkhoses discovered a plant disease, he was instructed to notify OPBVR at Smolensk immediately. The Smolensk office in turn dispatched experts to the sovkhos to determine the nature of the disease and to effect control. If in the opinion of the regional experts the disease was critical, the Oblast agronomists took over.
8. Each of the Oblasts in the USSR had an excellent agricultural college prior to WWII. In the Zapadnaya Oblast Smolensk had a fine agricultural college. [Source was unable to give detailed info on this school]. From what I understand, the curriculum of each agricultural college was prepared to fit the needs of the surrounding territory, consequently the graduates of these schools in most instances were assigned to positions within the oblast.
9. The most prevalent diseases among crops in the Smolensk or Vitebsk sectors were:
  - a. Potato rot
  - b. Cabbage - worms and bugs during the month of July
  - c. Flax - rust which began in July
  - d. Grains - rust.

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